

National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity



July 15, 2009

The Honorable Henry Waxman
Chairman
Committee on Energy & Commerce
2125 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chairman
Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health
2125 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Joe Barton
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy & Commerce
2322A Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nathan Deal
Ranking Member
Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health
2322A Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Waxman & Pallone and Ranking Members Barton & Deal,

The National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity strongly supports the prevention and wellness provisions (Division C) of the “America’s Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009.” These provisions go far to help turn our current “sickcare” system into a true healthcare one. P

We are particularly pleased to see the inclusion of the National Prevention and Wellness Strategy which would allow us to work in cross departmental manner to set clear and realistic goals for improving health of Americans. We believe that such a coordinated effort is integral to health reform.

Funding has been woefully short in the areas of both public health and prevention and has contributed greatly to the severe rise in chronic diseases and obesity. Of particular note is that that these conditions are no longer largely confined to adults but the number of children being diagnosed on a yearly basis is very sobering. The Public Health Investment Fund created in this bill would be a sorely needed dedicated funding stream for public health and prevention that is needed to meet the many emerging health threats we must face, and the persistent chronic disease rates that we must begin to control. The fund would:

- The Fund would allow us to build upon what we know already works and to test new approaches. It would enable us to prioritize prevention and health, instead of just treatment. It would allow research that would enable us to further strengthen the case for prevention.
- The Fund would also help finance the delivery of evidence-based community-based prevention and wellness services grants. Research has shown that effective community level prevention activities focusing on nutrition, physical activity and smoking cessation can reduce chronic disease rates and have a significant return on investment.

- The community-based prevention and wellness services grants offer much needed flexibility, instead of dictating in the legislation what each community must implement, because the prevention needs of each population are different. It is critical to note that there is not one approach that will work for all populations and success will depend upon such flexibility.
- The Fund authorizes and finances the U.S. Community Preventive Services Task Force and the Task Force on Clinical Preventive Services. It is important to not only authorize but also to finance these task forces, giving them the resources they need to do be able to provide the health community and policy makers with the information they need to make the best decisions about preventive health. This help to insure that as we expand our investment in prevention, that we fund programs and interventions that are evidence based and cost effective.

The Centers for Disease Control and prevention estimates that if all physically inactive Americans became active, we would save \$77 billion in annual medical costs.¹ Physical activity (Along with nutrition and tobacco cessation) must be considered a central building block in prevention and wellness strategies if we are to truly convert to a health care oriented system.

Investing in prevention gives all Americans the opportunity to lead healthier lives and ensures our workforce is strong and healthy enough to compete with the rest of the world. The Public Health Investment Fund and National Prevention and Wellness Strategy would lower disease rates, improve quality of life, and reduce health care costs for millions of Americans.

We urge you to adopt and embrace the prevention and wellness provisions of the "America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009". Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Sheila Franklin
Executive Director
National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity

¹ Pratt M, Macera CA, Wang G. "Higher Direct Medical Costs Associated with Physical Inactivity." The Physician and Sportsmedicine 2000, vol. 28, pp. 63-70.